

American Society of Neuroimaging Response to:

“Higher Use of Advanced Imaging Services by Providers Who Self-Refer Costing Medicare Millions”

- A 2012 GAO report commissioned by Sens. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), and Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), Sander Levin (D-Mich.), and Pete Stark (D-Calif.).

- GAO uses a deficient methodology¹ which grossly misrepresents utilization and costs^{1,2}
- The report *does not* show that self-referring providers use more imaging^{1,2}
- The Hospital-ER complex – a nexus of high cost healthcare -^{3,4} is excluded by GAO
- Non-hospital MRI & CT = ½ % of total spending, and decreasing
- Self-referred MRI & CT = 1/6 % of total spending, and decreasing
- Hospital-based MRI & CT = 4 % of total spending², *and growing*^{3,4}
- Hospital –based imaging is very costly, for no added benefit^{3,4}
- Self-referring physicians compete with the Hospital, improve access, and reduce costs
- Implementing GAO recommendations would *increase* Medicare spending by billions²

References

1. Hutchinson M, Chawluk J, Gomez C *et al*, Self-referral of imaging does not imply overutilization. *J. Neuroimaging*, 2009;19:80-83.
2. Hutchinson M, Rowe E, Kushner M, Fritz J, Rowe V, Appropriate Use of High End Imaging by Providers Who Self-Refer Saving Medicare Billions, *submitted*
3. Pettypiece S, "Hospital Medicare Cash Lures Doctors as Costs Increase". *Bloomberg News*, November 19, 2012 online.
4. Mathews AW. "Same Doctor Same Visit, Double the Cost" *Wall Street Journal*. 2012, August 27, p B1.